

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2006

The Hon. Ralph Regula, Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. David R. Obey, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

We are writing in support of funding in fiscal year (FY) 2007 for the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

As an independent federal agency, the Corporation is responsible for some of the most effective programs that engage citizens across generations in service to help address critical community needs around the nation. These programs include AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Learn and Serve America and Senior Corps.

Since September 2005, more than 13,000 national service participants have provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. Of these, 1,600 members of NCCC and 700 AmeriCorps members have been deployed to the region to perform an endless variety of critically needed services. They have established and operated temporary shelters, provided meals and social services, coordinated the warehousing and distribution of donated goods, cleared debris, organized children's activities and managed thousands of community volunteers who offered to help.

The national service response, however, has not been limited to the on-the-ground effort in the Gulf. In communities across the country, national service programs are joining with local, state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide long-term relief to those uprooted and displaced by the storms. For example, tens of thousands of students supported by Learn and Serve America are collecting school supplies, raising funds and preparing disaster relief kits.

National service programs are needed now more than ever, not only to care for evacuees and rebuild cities, but to make society more resilient in preparing for and preventing future crises. We are concerned that the Administration's proposal to eliminate the NCCC and to cut the AmeriCorps State and National and Learn & Serve programs sends precisely the wrong message to citizens who want to build a better tomorrow for those in the greatest need. Independent evaluations show that the benefits generated by these programs are worth the federal investment in them. We urge you to provide a robust appropriation to preserve the continuum of service and engage more Americans in this critical work.

AmeriCorps State and National is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connect more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country's needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. Since FY04, funding to support AmeriCorps operations has been on a persistent decline. We urge you to stop this trend, and restore the program to its FY 2005 enacted level of \$430.5 million for AmeriCorps State and National grants and the National Service Trust Fund. We support at least level funding for AmeriCorps VISTA, as recommended by the President.

The AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time residential program for men and women, ages 18-24 that strengthens communities while developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. The NCCC is a trained force that can be immediately deployed. Four trained NCCC teams were pulled from other assignments and sent to support shelters in Mississippi and Alabama one day after Hurricane Katrina hit. The service NCCC members provided to evacuees was invaluable, and so is the NCCC. We urge you to reject the Administration's proposals to terminate the NCCC and to provide **\$26 million to continue the** program's operations.

The Corporation for National and Community Service has worked closely with this Congress and the Administration to improve the agency's management and the operation of its programs. If additional steps must be taken to enhance and reform the NCCC, we look forward to working with CNCS to make the necessary changes. But we cannot support the immediate termination of a program that is on the ground helping our fellow Americans in times of great need.

Learn and Serve America supports and encourages service-learning throughout the United States, providing direct and indirect support to K-12 schools, community groups and higher education institutions to facilitate service-learning projects. The program enables over 1.5 million students to make meaningful contributions to their communities while building their academic and civic skills and instilling an ethic of lifelong community service. Learn and Serve America is a relatively small grant program with huge impact: a four to one return on the federal investment of only \$28 per student. We recommend that you restore the program to its traditional funding level of \$43 million to support service learning.

The National Senior Service Corps is a network of programs including Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) that utilize the experience, skills, and talents of older citizens to meet community needs and challenges. We support at least level funding for Senior Corps in FY 2007, as recommended by President Bush.

We understand the difficult task you face trying to allocate limited resources wisely, but we respectfully urge you to protect each of these relatively small investments that have such profound impact. Cutting funding for one of these programs to fund another is not the answer. Please restore full funding for the NCCC, AmeriCorps State and National and Learn & Serve America.

Sincerely,

Charles Sings

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Jerold Hadden

Charles B. Hadden

Charles Fadden

Jim Hadden

John Hadden

Norm Hadden

Shirley Hadden

Jim Hudson

Shelley Barkley

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Joe Long M.D.

Steve Ogden

Mike Rose

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Burt Hosi

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Shao

Hyd I Daggitt

Ed Case

John Lewis

Melvin L. Watt

Chaff

Dr. O. Matsui

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